NEA:(NE) H.H.Stackhouse
RHMcBride:rf:5/26/65

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Memorandum of Conversation

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REVIEWED BY S. Duncan Taylor DATE 3/1/84
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EOI EXEMPTIONS

DATE: Paris, April 1, 1965

SUBJECT: Jordan Waters

PARTICIPANTS: Phillip Talbot, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Charles Lucet, Director, Political Affairs, Foreign Office
Robert H. McBride, Minister, ~~American~~ Embassy, Paris

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Mr. Talbot suggested that there might be a brief discussion of the problem of the waters of the Jordan and certain arms questions in the Middle East. He noted that Israel was concerned with the Lebanese position and he wondered how active the French were being with the Lebanese.

Mr. Lucet said that the French Foreign Minister had held talks with Foreign Minister Takla in December and that the President of Lebanon would be in Paris in May. He added the French had always taken the line with the Lebanese that they should not be provocative. The French position was further, with reference to the Jordan waters, to follow the quotas of the Johnston Plan. If water was diverted from Lebanon to Syria this would be unfair to Israel and a provocation. Mr. Lucet added that the French were taking the same line with the Israelis and saying that they should not move provided the Lebanese took water only for its own needs. He added Mrs. Meir agreed with the French but that she is so moderate that she may not be representative of opinion in Israel. Mr. Lucet added that the French were not having any particular problems with Jordan.

Mr. Talbot said we had told Israel that we stood behind the Johnston Plan and had told the Lebanese the same thing. Mr. Talbot referred to Arab pressures on the Lebanese and wondered how much longer they could withstand them. He added he hoped to calm the Israelis and hoped that the Lebanese would not undertake major construction. In any event, we believed it would be some years before there was any substantial diversion.

Mr. Lucet

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Mr. Lucet thought it would be as much as ten years before any water could be diverted to Syria. Mr. Talbot added that should the Israelis attack Lebanon the other Arabs would rush in. Mr. Lucet commented that the Lebanese had taken a very weak position in Arab meetings.

Mr. Talbot said we had been concerned about the situation before the Harriman visit to Israel and were not less worried now. We thought that the results of an Israeli attack would be highly adverse.

Mr. Lucet asked if we were studying a joint demarche on the Arabs and Israelis. Mr. Talbot said that we had considered, in this moment of tension, attempting an overall solution of all these problems at once but that this did not seem presently feasible. We would have to decide what problems to tackle first and then when and how and what countries we would approach.

Mr. Lucet said that the French were highly concerned about the problem of Jordan waters. He thought perhaps the French could be helpful since they had good relations with Lebanon and Israel and also fairly good relations with Syria. Mr. Lucet thought that the French might be useful particularly with the Syrians. Mr. Lucet commented that the Syrians, of course, were difficult.